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Homophobia Debate Facts

Greta Cohen

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3/29/94

TO: Bill Bartels *note*
FROM: Greta Cohen
RE: Material for Debate on Homosexuality/Homophobia

Not sure that any of this material will be of assistance to you, but something may spark an idea or provide fuel. In any case, I hope that it will help, wish you well and I will be in attendance to offer support.

Miscellaneous facts:

Thirty percent of all teenage suicides are lesbian and gay youth who feel so isolated, scared and unhappy that they kill themselves.

- U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

The fear of being called lesbian or gay keeps young girls and boys from choosing to participate in activities and sports outside of traditional gender roles.

In 1990, Gay Games III was held in Vancouver, British Columbia. More than 7,000 athletes from 30 countries around the world competed, making Gay Games III the largest international sporting event that year - even surpassing the Goodwill Games held that year. Gay Games IV will be held this summer in New York City and the 1994 organizers expect more than 14,000 athletes to compete.

By 1991, only 17 States and D.C. had hate crime laws that included crimes based on sexual orientation.

- National Gay Lesbian Task Force

Under the Pentagon's new "don't tell" policy for Gays in the military, any ROTC student who divulges one's sexual orientation to the medical personnel at university health centers would legally constitute "homosexual conduct" and could be the basis for a discharge from the military. The same is true for college counseling centers.

Academe Sept.-Oct. 1993

Cadets enrolled in ROTC who identify themselves as homosexual will be discharged from the program and required by military policy to pay back scholarship monies, even if they did not know their sexual orientation upon entering ROTC.

Academe Sept.-Oct. 1993

John Chen

INFORMATION ON ANTI-GAY/LESBIAN VIOLENCE, VICTIMIZATION AND
DEFAMATION IN 1990 **

** All information in this summary was taken from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute report: Anti-Gay/Lesbian Violence, Victimization and Defamation in 1990. (NGLTF, 1734 14th St. Washington DC 20009-4309).

A total of 1,588 incidents of anti-gay violence and victimization were reported to gay and lesbian victim assistance agencies in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York and San Francisco in 1990. Incidents included harassment, intimidation, physical assault, vandalism, arson, police abuse and murder. Taken together, anti-gay and lesbian incidents in all six cities increased 42% from 1989.

Physical assaults were among the most serious incidents to increase during 1990. Reports of such attacks rose by 14% in Chicago (to 88), 39% in San Francisco (230), 64% in the Boston area (69), 100% in Los Angeles (50), 114% in New York City (257), and 210% in Minneapolis/St. Paul (31).

Examples of anti-gay and lesbian violence include:

*on July 2 in Queens NY, a Latino gay man was bludgeoned and stabbed to death.

*on May 12 in Seattle, members of a white supremacist group attempted to bomb a gay and lesbian dance club on a busy night.

*in Worcester, MA, a group of teenagers repeatedly vandalized the home of a lesbian couple during the summer.

*on August 20, four Skinheads attacked two gay men with fists and bottles while screaming "faggot" and "queer".

Intimidation and harassment were the most frequently reported types of victimization in the six cities, with 853 acts being recorded. Episodes involving physical assault were the second most frequently documented type of abuse (725), followed by police abuse (137), vandalism (96), robbery and extortion (59) homicide (19), bomb threats (10), and arson (3).

Local police in five of the six urban areas documented significant increases during 1990 in the number of crimes classified as anti-gay. Such episodes rose 200% in Boston (to 39), 400% in Chicago (10), 350% in Minneapolis/St. Paul

(9), 117% in New York City (102) and 23% in San Francisco (97). Los Angeles recorded a drop by 38% in reported anti-gay crimes.

Victimization data published in 1990 and early 1991 show that attacks against lesbians and gay men continue to be alarmingly widespread. In a study of anti-gay discrimination and violence in Massachusetts (n=1,370) conducted by the Fenway Community Health Center, 29% of gay men and 10% of lesbians reported having been beaten because of their sexual orientation. 84% of of lesbians and 88% of gay men had encountered some type of anti-gay harassment, intimidation or violence.

In a statewide victimization study conducted by the Gay and Lesbian Community Council of Utah (n=234), 18% of those surveyed had been punched, hit, kicked or beaten at least once in their lives (excluding 1990) because of their sexual orientation. Seven percent (7%) had encountered such abuse in just the past year.

In the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, 11% of lesbians and gay men surveyed by the Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council (n=1,964) had been the victims of anti-gay physical abuse.

Also, according to the Seattle Commission for Lesbians and Gays (n=1,291), 16% of lesbians and gay men surveyed in the Seattle metropolitan area had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation.

Examples of reported violence and victimization in 1990 include:

*In Nashua NH, a man who confessed to murdering two lesbians in 1988 was set free July 10 after three Superior Court juries failed to reach a verdict in his trial. In a confession he later recanted, the suspect said he killed the women because he "loathed their lifestyle". In addition, he allegedly threatened to kill the two women on several occasions.

*In Palos Heights, IL, two men shouting anti-gay slurs punched a gay man, stepped on his face with spiked shoes, and beat him with tree branches. One assailant also gouged his finger into the victim's eyes and poked a stick into the victim's eardrum, puncturing it. As a result of the attack, the gay man suffered fractured bones, numerous lacerations and bruises.

*In San Francisco, CA, vandals firebombed the gay and lesbian Metropolitan Community Church in the early morning of

November 16. Although no one was injured in the blast, the church suffered \$1,000 in damages.

*In Biloxi, MS, members of a Skinhead gang entered a gay and lesbian bar, picked up pool cues and bar stools, and assaulted patrons. Injuries to several of the victims required emergency medical attention. Four of the Skinheads were subsequently arrested and charged with malicious mischief, trespass and assault.

*In Grand Chute, WI, on July 27, three off-duty policemen harassed a 20 year-old gay man at a bar in a mall, taking his hat and calling him a "fag." When the man left the bar to avoid further harassment, one of the officers chased him through the parking lot and tackled him. Shouting "faggot", the officer then punched the victim in the face and kicked him in the ribs. All three policemen face criminal charges stemming from the incident.

*In Concord, CA, a local AIDS activist received repeated telephone threats, including a bomb threat, at his home and at the store where he worked. One caller told the victim, "We don't want any faggots in Concord," and that he should leave town "if you care about your friends." In order to protect his friends and fellow employees, the victim left his job and moved to another community.

*In Salt Lake City, UT, a woman walking with her son was pelted with food by four men in a passing car. One of the men yelled, "I bet your proud of your dyke mom, little boy!" When the car returned a short while later, one of the men got out, unzipped his pants, and made obscene gestures, and said to the woman, "what you need is a real man."

*In Anamosa, IA, an inmate at Iowa Men's Reformatory reported that gay prisoners are required to wear black dots on their identification tags that identify them as gay, leading to increased harassment, denial of privileges, and other abuse.

*In Washington, DC, White House counsel C. Boyden Gray used the word "fag" in a speech to local Republicans. In his remarks, which were made on November 1, Gray said that rumors had been spread that a Federal Home Loan Board examiner was a "fag." Gray unapologetically used the term a second time in a press interview about his speech.

*In Detroit, MI, A promotional video produced by the Chevrolet Division of General Motors included a remark in which a customer referred to foreign model pick-ups as "some little faggot truck." After complaints by gay activists and public officials, General Motors apologized for the video and deleted the offensive remark.



The University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881-0810
Department of Physical Education, Health & Recreation, Tootell Physical Education Center
June 8, 1993

Dear Representative,

Please stop the hate!

The silence is so loud it screams.

We are either all free or none of us are free.

These slogans are well known; they do not represent theory on the cutting edge. Yet to many individuals, who endorse a Sexual Orientation Bill, their message is still poignant.

As a professor and former coach at the University of Rhode Island, I have listened to students who are struggling with their sexual identity. Homophobia, I am sad to report, is rampant among the undergraduate population. Acts of violence have escalated. Many of these youngsters express intense fears that reflect three basic concerns:

1. Personal identification - Why did this happen to me? I never did anything wrong!
2. Coping strategies - How can I be true to myself and continue to live in R.I. without my family or friends discovering that I am gay /lesbian?
3. Resolution - I didn't ask to be born gay - I can't deal with this any longer. There is no way out for me; I want to die.

I have been teaching young men and women ages 18-21 for the past twenty-seven years and their stories remain the same. This population is afraid to speak up or act out. Often they suffer in silence, drop out of sports, flunk courses, or simply withdraw from the University. Many students have confided to me that they are too afraid to seek out support services because they fear a breach of confidentiality.

It is time that Rhode Island supports civil rights for everyone. I am writing to request that Bill 93-S130, the Sexual Orientation Bill, be passed with no further amendments. I cannot stress enough the importance of this bill. This legislation is critical to a substantial population who have been denied their civil rights, experience blatant discrimination every day of their lives and live in constant fear of retaliation. You can make the difference.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Greta L. Cohen'.

Dr. Greta L. Cohen
Professor of Physical Education & Women's Studies
Chairperson, Affirmative Action Committee